DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 321 379 EA 022 013

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TITLE Public School Administrators: Components of Burnout.
PUB DATE 87
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Washington, DC, April 20-24, 1987).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Effectiveness; *Administrators; *Burnout; Elementary Secondary Education; Principals; *Public Schools; Quality of Working Life; Role Perception; *Stress Management; *Stress Variables
IDENTIFIERS Oregon

ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study of public school administrators were to determine the level of burnout experienced by school administrators, the relationships between burnout and stress measures, the factors associated with burnout, and the relationships between administrative level and components of the Administrative Role Perception Inventory (Hales and Wax, 1982). Mailed questionnaires to all active members of the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators (COSA), which comprises approximately 75 percent of the state's practicing administrators, yielded 1,300 returns with an approximate 63 percent response rate. The sample distribution of central office administrators and principals and vice principals at all three school levels was similar to COSA membership distribution. A quantitative methodology using coefficient of correlation, analysis of variance, multivariate analysis of variance, univariate analysis, and Scheffe's test for pair-wise mean comparisons concluded that effective principals are active instructional leaders and disciplinarians. However, the principal's leadership role is influenced by a reflexive relationship with central office administration. Findings demonstrate the need for stress management and other human development programs that recognizes the reality of burnout. (32 references) (LMI)

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PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS: COMPONENTS OF BURNOUT

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Paper presented at the
annual meeting of AERA
Washington, D.C., 1987

EA 022 013

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Public School Administrators: Components of Burnout

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Objectives

The objectives of this study of public school administrators were to determine: the level of burnout experienced by school administrators; the relationships between burnout and stress measures; the factors associated with burnout in school administrators; the relationships between administrative level and self-perceived burnout, expectation discrepancy, relationships with others, psychological and physical state, motivation, accomplishment, and time orientation.

Perspectives

If stress is viewed as the physical/mental result of any physical or mental demand on the body for survival or accomplishment of our aims (Selye, 1980), then stress is an inevitable result of living and energy is continuously consumed in reacting to the ever present stress. As a stressful event occurs, it produces within the individual a state of stress. An event is stressful if it involves a change in the usual activities (placing a demand on the body) and if the event is perceived as stressful by the individual experiencing it (Selye, 1980). The perception of an event as stressful is learned (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend in Selye, 1980). There are many potential stressors in complex organizations (such as schools), including role ambiguity (Abdel-Halim, 1978), need for autonomy (Morris & Snyder, 1979), excessive or conflicting job demands

(Helfman & Kottkamp, 1984), need for independence (Johnson & Stinson, 1975), need for self-esteem (Mossholder, Bedeian, & Armenakis, 1981), and high achievement motivation with feelings of discrepancy between expectation and extent of attainment (Leeson, 1980). Therefore, one could surmise that the job of the school administrator is rich in potential external stressors.

Although the level of stress among administrators has been described as slight to moderate (Farkas, 1983; Friesen & Richards, 1984), the increased awareness of stress among school administrators, as well as the changing status and authority of administrators, is likely to contribute to greater perceived stress (Hales & Wax, 1986).

When an individual is subjected to long-term, continuous, moderately high to high stress, with no expectation of relief, the individual may positively adjust self-concepts and redefine job roles, develop mental problems, develop physical problems, or exhibit the characteristics of burnout (Wax & Hales, 1984). See Figure 1.

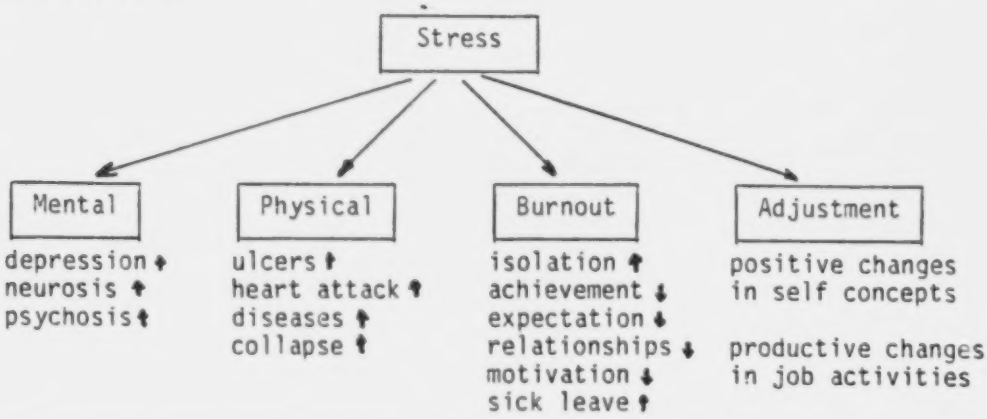

Figure 1. Reactions to stress when there is no expectation of relief.

Even a cursory examination reveals that "burnout," a term coined within the last decade, has received considerable attention in the popular press, professional journals, and professional meetings. It has been studied in relation to social workers, counselors, prison personnel, mental health workers, policemen, and teachers. It has been discussed from a theoretical and causal frame-of reference (Freudenberger, 1974, 1975, 1977; Gann, 1979; Leeson, 1980; Maslach, 1978; Maslach & Jackson, 1979; Maslach & Pines, 1977, 1979; Pines & Maslach, 1978, 1980). Factors related to burnout have been identified, including expectancy discrepancy, accomplishment, motivation, physical and psychological state, relationships (Freudenberger, 1980; Maslach & Jackson, 1979, 1981; Pines & Maslach, 1980; Savicki, 1980), and time orientation (Wax & Hales, 1984).

Although there have been many studies of burnout, including burnout among educators (Beck & Gargiulo, 1983; Kottkamp & Mansfield, 1983; Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982; Waggoner & Hales, 1984), most studies which used an inventory designed to measure the factors associated with burnout have used instruments designed for use with other professionals--those who work with people having problems ("deficit situations"). The work of school administrators is much broader--though negatively oriented, people problems do occur. Also, burnout has been associated with degree of direct contact with clients. In schools, the direct clients are the students. However, for the administrator, clients also include other staff and parents. Thus, the jobs of school administrators differ from those of other human service workers in terms of the nature of the problems encountered and the degree of direct client contact; generalization from human service workers to administrators may not be sound.

Thus, this study of public school administrator burnout and stress was conducted, using a burnout instrument developed by Hales and Wax (1982), the Administrator Role Perception Inventory (ARPI). Evidence of the reliability and validity of this instrument was satisfactory (Wax, 1983).

Methods and Data Source

All of the active members of the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators (COSA), comprising about 75% of Oregon's practicing administrators, were surveyed my mail. Each mailed packet contained the ARPI, a biographical questionnaire, instructions, a cover letter with COSA's endorsement, a letter of explanation from the researcher, and a postage-paid, return-addressed envelope. A total of 1300 returns was received (about 63%); 30 were too late to be included in the data analysis.

The responding sample consisted of superintendents and assistants (14%), supervisors (15%), secondary school line administrators (19%), junior-high/middle school line administrators (15%), elementary school line administrators (28%), and others (9%); this approximated the distribution of the COSA membership. Thus, most of the respondents were line administrators with responsibility at the building level (62%). Their median age was 46.0, and their median time in present position was 4.4 years.

For the total sample, frequency distributions, means, medians, and standard deviations were calculated on job status stress, personal job-related stress, self-perceived burnout, and ARPI scales (including total ARPI score). Coefficients of correlation between the scales of the ARPI and job stress status, personal job-related stress, and self-perceived burnout were calculated. An analysis of variance, followed by Scheffe's test, was performed

on self-perceived levels of burnout, with administrative level as the independent variable. A multivariate analysis of variance, followed by univariate analyses and Scheffe's test for pair-wise mean comparisons, was performed on the ARPI scales, with administrative level as the independent variable. The .05 level of significance was used in each comparison.

Results and Conclusions

The means, standard deviations, medians, and quartile deviations, as appropriate, for job stress status, personal job-related stress, self-perceived burnout, and the ARPI scales are presented in Table 1. The medians for the

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Job Stress Status, Personal Job-Related Stress, Self-Perceived Burnout, and ARPI Scales

Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	Quartile Deviation
Job Stress Status*			5.70	0.91
Personal, Job-Related Stress*			4.60	1.04
Self-Perceived Burnout*			3.45	1.37
Expectation (ARPI)	28.07	5.44	27.89	
Motivation (ARPI)	35.30	4.71	35.45	
Psycho-Physical State (ARPI)	32.96	6.44	33.10	
Relationships (ARPI)	39.07	4.29	39.27	
Accomplishment (ARPI)	39.72	4.14	39.82	
Time (ARPI)	28.70	4.71	29.05	
Total ARPI	175.07	19.08	174.56	

* Single-item scales

three self-perceived items were 5.70 (job stress status), 4.60 (personal, job-related stress), and 3.45 (self-perceived level of burnout). Since the perception of an event as stressful is, in part, learned (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend in Selye, 1980), this difference between the stress items suggest

that administrators will exhibit greater stress as they adjust to perceived societal norms. The lower median for burnout is to be expected because prolonged stress is necessary for burnout to occur and because many severely burned out administrators are likely to have left their positions and not be in the sample.

With one exception (Accomplishment with job stress status), all correlations between these three items and the scales of th ARPI were statistically significant and in the expected direction. (The lower the scores on the ARPI the more negative the self-perceptions.) The median correlations with the ARPI scales were -.18 for job stress status, -.37 for personal job-related stress, and -.53 for self-perceived burnout. (See Table 2.)

Table 2

Correlations Between the ARPI Burnout Scales and Job Stress Status, Personal Job-Related Stress and Self-Perceived Burnout

ARPI Scales	Job Stress Status		Personal Job-Related Stress		Self Perceived Burnout	
	r	p	r	p	r	p
Total Scale	-.21	.001	-.42	.001	-.59	.001
Expectation	-.27	.001	-.39	.001	-.37	.001
Motivation	-.08	.010	-.25	.001	-.53	.001
Psycho-Physical State	-.28	.001	-.48	.001	-.58	.001
Relationships	-.08	.010	-.18	.001	-.32	.001
Accomplishment	-.01	--	-.19	.001	-.40	.001
Time	-.18	.001	-.37	.001	-.55	.001

Note: High scale scores indicate low levels of burnout.

As expected, personal, job related stress is related to the burnout factors of the ARPI, but not to the same magnitude as self-perceived burnout. With the

exception of Time, the specific ARPI scales reflect factors which have been associated with burnout in various studies (Freudenberger, 1980; Maslach & Jackson, 1979, 1981; Pines & Maslach, 1978; Savicki 1980; Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982). Thus, the self-percieved burnout of these administrators is related to factors related to burnout. With approximately one-half of the administrators indicating feelings of burnout, one may conclude that burnout exists among Oregon administrators and may for some be influencing job performance (if one assumes that these factors are related to job performance).

Using administrative levels (elementary, junior high/middle schol, high school, central office) as the independent variable and self-perceived burnout as the dependent variable, tne statistical hypothesis for the analysis of variance was not rejected ($F = 0.37$; $df = 3, 1180$; $p = .77$). The level of self-perceived burnout did not differ according to administrative level at which employed. However, when using the scales of the ARPI as dependent variables, the statistical nypothesis was rejected for the MANOVA (Wilk's approximate $F = 18.43$; $df = 15, 3247$; $p < .0001$). Using ANOVA significant differences were found on five scales: Expectation ($F = 4.13$; $p < .01$); Relationships ($F = 42.94$; $p < .001$); Accomplishment ($F = 3.04$; $p < .03$); Time ($F = 6.51$; $p < .001$); and Total Scale ($F = 3.24$; $p < .03$). (The scale means and standard deviations for public school administrators at different job locations are presented in Table 3; the results of the analyses of variance are found in Table 4.) Using the Scheffe test of all pair-wise mean comparisons, the means for central office

Table 3

Scale Means and Standard Deviations for Public School Administrators at Different Job Locations

Location (Statistics)	Expecta-tion	Motiva-tion	Psycho-Physical State	Relation-ships	Accom-plish-ment	Time	Total
Central Off. (N = 359)							
Mean	28.48	35.35	33.17	37.22	40.11	28.02	174.35
S.D.	5.30	4.89	6.20	4.35	4.20	4.57	18.92
Elementary (N = 366)							
Mean	28.23	34.87	32.85	40.48	39.62	28.83	176.05
S.D.	5.49	4.74	6.73	4.01	4.31	4.89	19.67
Jr. HS/MS (N = 196)							
Mean	28.30	35.83	33.74	40.06	39.81	29.81	177.75
S.D.	5.25	4.24	6.42	4.12	3.72	4.40	18.71
High School (N = 263)							
Mean	27.03	35.20	32.24	39.05	39.11	28.52	172.62
S.D.	5.65	4.74	6.21	3.75	4.07	4.54	18.96

Table 4

Univariate Analysis of Variance for the ARPI Scales

Scale	Between Groups*		Within Groups**		F	p
	Sum of Sqs.	Mean Sq.	Sum of Sqs.	Mean Sq.		
Expectation	365.01	121.67	34762.84	29.46	4.13	.006
Motivation	124.82	41.61	26161.68	22.17	1.88	.132
Psycho/Physical	279.17	93.06	48375.95	41.00	2.27	.079
Relationships	2144.77	714.92	19644.26	16.65	42.94	.000
Accomplishment	155.53	51.84	20136.10	17.06	3.04	.028
Time	420.13	140.04	25376.63	21.51	6.51	.000
Total	3520.90	1173.63	427976.76	362.69	3.24	.022

* df = 3
** df = 1180

were greater than the means for high school administrators on Accomplishment and Expectation. The mean for central office administrators was less than the means for all other groups on Relationships; it was greater than the high school administrators' mean on the Time scale. On the Total Scale, the mean for junior high/middle school administrators was greater than the mean for high school administrators. Thus, on factors related to burnout, the central office administrators had less positive scores on Relationships and more favorable scores on Accomplishment and Expectation. (See Table 5.)

Table 5

Significant Pair-Wise Mean Comparisons for the ARPI Scales

Scale	Significant Pairs
Expectation	CO-HS
Relationships	CO-HS; CO-JrH; CO-El; HS-El
Accomplishment	CO-HS
Time	CO-JrH
Total	HS-JrH

CO = Central Office Administration
HS = High School Principals & Vice Principals
JrH = Junior High/Middle School Principals & Vice Principals
El = Elementary School Principals & Vice Principals

Educational Importance of the Study

Effective principals are active. In schools where pupil performance has shown consistent improvement, the principal is more likely to be more assertive as an instructional leader and disciplinarian than in schools where performance is declining (Brookover & Lezotte; 1977). The principal establishes the tone of the school, the quality of the program, and tne responsiveness to the community. All of these acts involve "people" skills, motivation, positive expectations, and pnysical and mental energy. Although research has focused

chiefly on the principal's leadership and its effect on the school, the principal does not exist in a vacuum. Much of what he or she is able to accomplish will be influenced by the relationships with central office administrators, whose own leadership will then be a factor affecting the building administrator.

The study has further importance in its contribution to an understand of stress and the burnout phenomenon, a situation which can seriously reduce the effectiveness of school administrators. The conclusions strengthen the rationale for district involvement in wellness programs, training in stress management, motivational development, and possibly early retirement programs.

Finally, an important contribution of this study is that it reveals the very existence of administrative burnout. Many school administrators refuse to acknowledge its reality and vehemently deny that it is a problem.

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